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State Announces 'Grandfathering' Grace Period for Hair Braiders

*Those performing hair braiding services illegally are given opportunity
to comply with state law*

RICHMOND – The Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) today announced a license examination waiver for hair braiders until July 1, 2004, as a result of a new state law. The waiver allows existing hair braiders to be “grandfathered” into a new hair braiding licensure program established by the General Assembly earlier this year.

In accordance with the new law, sponsored by Del. Thelma Drake (R-Norfolk), applicants for a waiver may qualify for a hair braiding license based on education or experience in the field. Qualifications include three years of documented work experience as a hair braider, completion of a hair braiding training program, or proof of valid licensure as a hair braider in another state. There is no fee to apply.

“Rather than prosecute hair braiders for unlicensed activity, the Department prefers to bring individuals into compliance with the law,” said Director Louise Fontaine Ware. “We strongly encourage all hair braiders to take advantage of this opportunity to obtain the required state license.”

Performing hair braiding services, including weaving and extensions, is illegal without a state-issued license. Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed a new law establishing a separate licensure category for individuals who perform hair braiding services exclusively. Individuals who hold a full cosmetology license – which requires 1,500 hours of training in additional hair treatments, including cutting and coloring – already may perform hair braiding services.

The new law eases the regulatory burden on hair braiders, but still protects their clients' health and safety by requiring appropriate education, training, and skill. For example, hair braiders should know the basics about hair and scalp disorders and how to sterilize tools properly.

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“The Department strives to remove barriers for people seeking to enter a profession,” Ware added. “At the same time, we have an obligation to protect the public, and the new hair braiding license allows us to meet both goals.”

Applications for the hair braiding license waiver are available online at www.dpor.state.va.us or by contacting the Board for Barbers and Cosmetology at (804) 367-8509.

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About DPOR

The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) administers and enforces laws regulating 31 commercial occupations and certain professions. The agency licenses or certifies more than 250,000 individuals and businesses ranging from architects and contractors to cosmetologists and professional wrestlers.

DPOR investigates reports of regulatory violations by licensees; pursues complaints of criminal activity by unlicensed practitioners; responds to business-related consumer inquiries and requests for license checks; administers recovery funds for consumers harmed in contractor or real estate transactions; and conducts mediation services and public awareness campaigns.

For more information, visit DPOR online at www.dpor.state.va.us